

Ham 7 - Res. 12-13

BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
630 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HI 96843



February 7, 2012

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Manager and Chief Engineer

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Deputy Manager

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The Honorable Tuisi Gabbard, Chair
Committee on Safety, Economic Development
and Government Affairs
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Gabbard:

Subject: Board of Water Supply Testimony in Response to Resolution 12-13, Fire Hydrants and Sprinkler Systems

The Board of Water Supply (BWS) is aware of the effects the enforcement of its off-site fire protection requirements have had on recent building applications. From April 2011 to November 2011, the BWS applied a maximum of half the fire hydrant spacing requirement from the hydrant to the property at 175 feet for single family residential dwellings, pursuant to the BWS Water System Standards, to determine if off-site fire protection distance requirements were met. In November 2011, the BWS and Honolulu Fire Department (HFD) agreed to use the entire fire hydrant spacing distance requirement of 350 feet for single family residential dwellings.

Additionally, the BWS is aware that revising its off-site fire protection policy does not satisfy 100 percent of the building permit applications, as some properties are beyond the fire hydrant distance requirement and/or the minimum hydrant flow from the closest hydrant is not met. In such cases, the BWS is continuing its discussions with both the HFD and the affected customers to try and find a reasonable solution that does not endanger the health and safety of the customer, the public, and the HFD.


Furthermore, the cost of providing more fire hydrants is not as simple as installing new fire hydrants to meet spacing requirements. The existing water mains may need to be enlarged to provide the minimum flows pursuant to BWS Standards to accommodate new or additional fire hydrants and/or water mains may need to be installed where none exist in order to place a fire hydrant within the spacing requirement. In some cases, the mains may be adequately sized, but the water system itself may need to be upgraded to ensure minimum hydrant flow is met pursuant to BWS standards for the additional hydrants.

The request for information in Resolution 12-13 will require substantial commitment of resources to develop and assemble. We are unsure, at this time, if we can reasonably provide everything that is being requested. However, should the resolution be passed by the Council, we will determine what can be reasonably provided and will report back to Council in writing.

In conclusion, the BWS will reexamine its off-site fire protection policy with the HFD to determine its impact on the ability of property owners to build or renovate homes and to evaluate the cost of improving fire protection in areas where off-site fire protection requirements are not met.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.

Very truly yours,


ERNEST Y. W. LAU, P.E.
Manager and Chief Engineer